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ABSTRACT

Divided into two parts, this study includes an analysis of the verbal content of Nixon and McGovern news stories carried by the three networks and an analysis of selected types of nonverbal content. The universe for the study was the 53 days, Monday through Friday, between the end of the Republican national convention and election day, 1972. A random sample of 20 days was selected, and on each of these 20 days the evening newscasts for all three television networks were recorded on audio tape. The results indicated that Nixon received a greater total amount of news coverage than did McGovern, but that the three networks carried significantly more anti-Republican judgments than anti-Democratic judgments. The verbal data were not particularly clearcut on the question of bias for one candidate or the other, but the nonverbal data showed an overall pattern which can be interpreted as a pro-McGovern bias. Further analysis indicated that, while ABC showed little significant bias for either candidate, it appears that television news can be relatively unbiased in terms of verbal content and, at the same time, biased in terms of nonverbal content. (Author/RB)

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MULTIPLE MEASURES OF NETWORK TV NEWS BIAS IN CAMPAIGN '72

by

Dennis T. Lowry*

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ABSTRACT

"Multiple Measures of Network TV News Bias in Campaign '72"
by
Dennis T. Lowry

The subject of network TV news bias was of greater potential importance in presidential Campaign '72 than in any previous ten-week period in the history of American broadcast journalism. This study is divided into two parts: (1) an analysis of the verbal content of Nixon and McGovern news stories carried by the three networks and (2) an analysis of selected types of non-verbal content.

The universe for the study was the 53 days (Monday through Friday) between the end of the Republican national convention and election day, 1972. A random sample of 20 days was selected, and on each of these 20 days the evening newscasts for all three TV networks were recorded on audio tape. During the recording, a content transformation was made on selected aspects of visual content.

Each story was transcribed sentence-by-sentence, and each sentence was placed into one of the nine verbal content categories. In addition, eight non-verbal content categories were used to measure the amount of non-verbal "news play" or emphasis given to the two candidates.

The results indicated that Nixon received a greater total amount of news coverage than did McGovern. However, the three networks carried significantly more anti-Republican judgments than anti-Democratic judgments.

The McGovern news items were significantly longer, that is, received significantly greater length emphasis than the Nixon items. All three networks devoted significantly higher proportions of on-camera time to pro-McGovern speakers (McGovern, Shriver, Kennedy, etc.) in McGovern news items than they did to pro-Nixon speakers in Nixon news items. In addition, McGovern news items were given significantly more film/tape visual emphasis, and significantly more overall visual emphasis.

In sum, the verbal data were not particularly clearcut on the question of bias for one candidate or the other---with the possible exception of the number of anti-Republican judgments the networks carried. On the other hand, the non-verbal data did show an overall pattern which can be interpreted as a pro-McGovern bias in general, but more-so for CBS and NBC than for ABC. ABC showed little significant bias for either candidate. It appears that TV news can be relatively unbiased in terms of verbal content and, at the same time, biased in terms of non-verbal content.

The subject of network TV news bias was of greater potential importance during presidential Campaign '72 than in any previous ten-week period in the history of American broadcast journalism. In addition to the general background of charges of news bias made by members of the Nixon Administration, there are at least five other reasons why this was so.

First, national opinion surveys have found that the voting age public relies heavily upon television news as a source of information about political candidates, especially candidates for national offices. In 1972, for example, 66% of those interviewed indicated that television was the medium through which they became best acquainted with political candidates for national office.[1]

Second, still other national opinion surveys of persons 18 years of age or older conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation indicated that the public holds extremely favorable opinions of television political news coverage. That is, television is a highly credible source of political news. In two studies, 55% and 63%, respectively, indicated that

TV provided the most complete political reporting and coverage of all major news media. Likewise, television news was rated as providing the fairest and most objective political reporting by 47% in the first study and 53% in the second study.[2]

Third, the 1972 general election was the first in our history involving campaign spending limitations. Thus, if the amount of money a candidate was permitted to spend to promote his candidacy was limited by law, while the amount of TV news coverage that a candidate might obtain was not limited by law, it would be reasonable to expect that the relative importance of TV political news coverage was increased.

Fourth, there is evidence that some of the people most intimately involved with "selling" political candidates---the campaign consultants---realize now, if they didn't before, that paid TV political spots are becoming less important, while TV political news exposure is becoming relatively more important. "What we've learned in these primary elections of 1972 is that massive amounts of TV spots are not the only answer. Voters are depending less on TV spots to help them make up their minds, and more on what they see on the TV news shows and read in the papers."[3]

Fifth, empirical evidence obtained by DeVries and Tarrance in a study of ticket-splitters produced some surprising rankings of the relative importance of 35 variables influencing voting decisions. Television newscasts were rated first in importance, newspaper stories were rated third, radio newscasts were rated tenth, and television advertisements were rated 24th.[4]

Given the broad coverage and influence of network television news in general, and the importance of network TV political news coverage to candidates for national office in particular, the significance of

monitoring and analyzing network TV political reporting is obvious. A well-informed electorate is essential to the effective functioning of the democratic process. If the electorate received biased political reporting from the three TV networks, then the extent of this bias should be measured and reported. If the electorate received unbiased reporting, this should also be determined and reported. The overall purpose of this study, then, was to analyze the reporting of Nixon and McGovern news items on the network TV evening newscasts during presidential Campaign '72 to attempt to determine (a) if any significant systematic bias existed and (b) if so, which candidate it favored.

Definitions of bias and approaches to the study of bias take a wide variety of forms in the research literature. Pride and Wamsley state, "Clearly, one cannot determine bias by content analysis alone."[5] It seems to this writer that this statement is incorrect. It is possible to determine one type of bias by content analysis alone, if two conditions are met. The first condition is that one must be willing to accept a relative definition of bias and must recognize that it is impossible to measure bias in human communication in any "absolute" sense. Therefore, bias in news reports and any other kind of human communication must always be subjectively defined. However, once it is so defined, it may be objectively measured within the context of the definition.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The second condition that must be met is that one must be able to analyze the content of more than one observer/reporter. In Figure 1, X represents some event or series of events. A, B, and C represent

observer/reporters of that event or series of events. If A were the only observer/reporter of the event then, as Pride and Wamsley state, it would be impossible to measure the bias in A's report by studying only A's report. However, in a situation where several observer/reporters are present, then it is indeed possible to measure one form of bias by content analysis alone simply by comparing the reports produced by the different observer/reporters. This type of comparison is indicated in Figure 1 by arrows 1, 2, and 3. If observer/reporters A, B, and C are not biased, then their reports of event X should not be significantly and systematically different---i.e., not different beyond what would be expected on a chance basis alone. If the reports produced by A, B, and C show significant and systematic differences, then it can be inferred that the observer/reporters were biased in some way. Why they were biased, and whether this bias was intentional, are of course separate questions. Comparing the three reports directly against X would provide measures of a different type of bias.

Defining news bias in a relative or comparative sense is not new. Two decades ago, Klein and Maccoby used such a definition of bias in their study of newspaper objectivity in the presidential campaign of 1952.

> "Bias" is here defined as the existence of a differential, larger than could be expected by chance alone, between the proportional front-page coverage allotted the two candidates by the two sets of papers. That is, bias is defined as the difference between proportions, or means.[6]

This is the same type of definition of bias used in the present study in conjunction with the content categories to be described below.

Method

This study is divided into two parts: (1) an analysis of the verbal content of the Nixon and McGovern news stories and (2) an analysis of selected types of non-verbal content (i.e., forms of journalistic or TV production emphasis used in the two types of stories).

The universe for the study was the 53 days (Monday through Friday) between the end of the Republican national convention and election day. A random sample of 20 days was selected, and on each of these 20 days the evening newscasts for all three TV networks were recorded on audio tape. The result was a randomly selected sample of 60 newscasts---20 from each network.

The methodology for this study is almost identical to the methodology found useful by this writer in two previous studies of network TV news. Thus, for a more complete discussion of the development of the content categories and the methodology used the interested reader should consult these reports.[7]

While the newscasts were being recorded on audio tape, a content transformation was made of selected visual content. When visual aids such as photographs, drawings, and maps were shown on the screen, monitors encoded this with a mechanical clicker so this information was also recorded on the audio tape. The same thing was done when film or tape was shown on the screen and when a correspondent (as distinguished from the anchorman) was shown on camera as part of a story.

Nixon and McGovern stories were transcribed sentence-by-sentence. A Nixon story was defined as one in which one-third or more of the time was directly related to Nixon, Agnew, and others campaigning or speaking for them (e.g., 20 seconds out of a 60-second item). A McGovern story was defined as one where one-third or more of the time was devoted to McGovern,

Shriver, and others campaigning or speaking for them. Some items had to be classified as "mixed" Nixon/McGovern items, because the news treatment of the candidates was intertwined.

The unit of analysis for the verbal half of the study was the sentence. The context unit while coding the sentences was the news item. The units of analysis for the non-verbal half of the study were simply the presence of individual visual aids, film/tape, and correspondents-on-camera.

Only sentences spoken by the anchormen and correspondents were transcribed and analyzed in this study. Sentences spoken by the candidates themselves or others, such as spectators at a political rally, were not transcribed and analyzed. The reason for this is that the focus of the verbal half of the study is on what the networks, acting in their reportorial capacity, said about the candidates and the campaign. When a candidate is shown on camera answering a question or making a speech he is, in effect, speaking directly to the public, and this portion of the event is not being interpreted/reported before it gets to the public. However, the time devoted to such direct on-camera statements is included in the appropriate time totals.

The verbal content categories. The system of nine verbal content categories used in this study is an extension and elaboration of a trichotomy of sentence types suggested by S. I. Hayakawa.[8] According to Hayakawa, the report is the basic symbolic act that enables people to exchange information on what they have seen, heard, and felt. "Reports adhere to the following rules: first, they are capable of verification; second, they exclude, as far as possible, inferences and judgments."[9] Based upon this trichotomy of sentence types, and the notion of attribution in news reporting, the author developed a system of nine content categories as follows:

1. Report sentences/attributed
2. Report sentences/unattributed
3. Inference sentences/labeled
4. Inference sentences/unlabeled
5. Judgment sentences/attributed/favorable
6. Judgment sentences/attributed/unfavorable
7. Judgment sentences/unattributed/favorable
8. Judgment sentences/unattributed/unfavorable
9. All other sentences.

In general, the lower the number (1 through 8) the less vulnerable a reporter is to charges of bias.

Report sentences are those which state verifiable facts---facts which are out in the open and observable, not things that are matters of personal opinion or inside somebody's head. Even though the receiver may not always be able to spend the time, money, and energy to verify it himself, the important thing is that a report sentence is of such a form that it is capable of being verified.[10]

Attribution, as it is used here, can take the form of a direct quote or an indirect quote, and can be to a specific source or a general source (e.g., "Informed sources indicated . . .). The question to ask is this: Is the reporter simply making this statement on his own, or is he saying what someone else said?

Inferences are not capable of verification, at least not at the time they are made. As Hayakawa defines them, they are "statements about the unknown made on the basis of the known."[11] Some of the characteristics of inferences are: they rely on personal or subjective opinions, conclusions, beliefs, feelings; they attempt to interpret events; they talk about the

implications of an event; they attempt to make generalizations; they attempt to make predictions; they attempt to tell what a certain event means; they attempt to evaluate; they attempt to say what other people think or feel, as opposed to a report of what other people say they think or feel; they attempt to explain someone's reasons or motives for doing something.[12]

Labeled inferences are a particular sub-category of inference. When a reporter uses a labeled inference, he is giving his audience a tip-off that he is using an inference, that what he is reporting has not been confirmed. For example, when he says, "It appears that . . ." he is saying parenthetically, "It appears (to me) that . . . ." Likewise, when he says, "It seems . . ." he is saying, "It seems (to me) . . . ." While many words could be considered tip-off words, only the following common words were so-defined in this study:

* appear, appears, appeared, apparently, appearing, apparent, appearance
* seem, seems, seemed, seemingly
* sound, sounds, sounded, sounding
* look, looks, looked, looking
* perhaps
* may
* could
* might
* probable, probably[13]

Judgment sentences, for the purpose of this study, were narrowly defined. As Hayakawa defines them, they are "expressions of the writer's approval or disapproval of the occurrences, persons, or objects he is describing."[14] In other words, sentences that indicated approval-disapproval, like-dislike, good-bad, and so on were classified as judgment sentences.

When judgments were found, they were further classified as to direction---favorable or unfavorable toward Nixon, Agnew, McGovern, or Shriver---and whether they were attributed to someone else or whether the reporter was making the judgment himself. Only sentences which contained judgments specifically related to the presidential and vice-presidential candidates were coded as judgments.[15]

The last category, All Other Sentences, was simply a catch-all category for sentences with words missing, rhetorical questions, and so on.

The following rules were set up to help coders classify "mixed" sentences:

1. If a sentence contains both statements of fact and inference, it will be coded as an inference sentence.
2. If a sentence contains both statements of fact and judgment, it will be coded as a judgment sentence.
3. If a sentence contains both an inference and a judgment, or all three, it will be coded as a judgment sentence.
4. If a sentence contains both an unlabeled inference and a labeled inference, it will be coded as an inference sentence/labeled.
5. If a sentence contains both a report/attributed and a report/unattributed, it will be coded as a report/attributed.

Coding was done by one main coder and two check coders. Inter-coder reliability using the above categories and rules was .88; intra-coder reliability was .94.

<u>The non-verbal content categories</u>. The eight non-verbal content categories are relatively simple and require little explanation. Their purpose was to measure some of the many types of non-verbal news emphasis or "play" that a TV news producer has at his control and that he can use to "play up"

or "play down" a candidate or a particular news story.

1. Overall number of news items devoted to Nixon as compared with McGovern
2. Mean position emphasis given to Nixon and McGovern news items. Generally, the first news item is considered to be the most important story of the day, the second item the second most important, and so on.
3. Mean length of Nixon and McGover items
4. Proportion of on-camera time given to the candidates and their supporters. To what extent were the candidates and their supporters allowed to speak on camera directly to the electorate to promote their own campaigns or to attack their opponents?
5. Mean number of visual aids used to add visual emphasis to Nixon and McGovern stories
6. Proportion of Nixon and McGovern items which were given film/tape visual emphasis
7. Proportion of Nixon and McGovern items in which a correspondent was shown on camera in addition to the anchorman
8. Proportion of Nixon and McGovern news items in which all three forms of visual emphasis were used

Before the coding began the network identifications on the transcripts were masked to prevent any possible network bias effect on the part of the coders. The transcripts were also randomized to prevent any systematic time sequence effect from influencing the coding.

The null hpothesis was assumed in all Nixon/McGovern comparisons and all between-network comparisons.

Results

The 60 newscasts produced a total of 206 news items concerning presiden-

tial Campai' '72. These were divided as follows: 100 Nixon items, 68 McGovern items, and 38 combined Nixon/McGovern items. Because the focus of this study was on the differential news handling of Nixon and McGovern items, the 38 items that could not be classified as primarily one or the other were not included in the analyses which follow.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Table 1 presents a summary of the data produced in the verbal content analysis. The 100 Nixon news items contained 778 sentences spoken by the anchormen and correspondents, while the 68 McGovern items contained 577. The totals for three of the nine categories of sentences were significantly different on Nixon and McGovern items. The Nixon news items contained a significantly higher proportion of report sentences/unattributed than did the McGovern items. The reason for this significant difference is open to various interpretations. One explanation is that, as will be shown below, the Nixon items tended to be shorter overall, and shorter items tend to have a higher proportion of report sentences and a lower proportion of inference sentences. This explanation is supported by the next significant difference in Table 1. The McGovern news items, which tended to be longer, contained a significantly higher proportion of inference sentences/labeled than did the Nixon items.

The third significant difference in Table 1 involves category 6R---judgment sentences/attributed/unfavorable directed specifically at two men, Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew. These were not judgments the anchormen and correspondents were making themselves, but, rather, were anti-Republican judgments that others (primarily George McGovern) made and that the networks were reporting to the American public. The McGovern news items con-

tained a significantly higher proportion of these anti-Republican judgments than did the Nixon news items. Furthermore, placing all of the 6R judgments and 6D judgments into two categories, and disregarding whether they occurred in Nixon items or McGovern items, produces a total of 40 anti-Republican judgments and 20 anti-Democratic judgments. Thus it can be said that there were significantly more anti-Republican judgments than anti-Democratic judgments carried by the three networks (X^2=6.66, df=1, $p < .01$).

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 2 contains a breakdown of the number of Nixon and McGovern items carried by each network. A 2X3 chi square does not reach the .05 level of significance, but a 2-cell chi square applied to the totals indicates that the differential frequency of 100 Nixon items to 68 McGovern items is greater than would be expected by chance. Therefore, it can be said that, overall, there was a significantly greater number of Nixon items than McGovern items (X^2=6.10, df=1, $p < .05$).

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Table 3 presents the data for the position emphasis given to Nixon and McGovern news items. The lower the mean values in the cells, the earlier the items appeared in the newscasts and, by definition, the greater the position emphasis. A two-way analysis of variance produced no significant main effects or interaction effects for the six cells. However, CBS does seem to depart from the pattern of the other two networks by giving noticeably more position emphasis to McGovern items than to Nixon items.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Table 4 presents the mean number of seconds devoted to Nixon and McGovern items on the three networks. A two-way analysis of variance of this data indicates that the McGovern items overall were significantly longer, that is, received significantly greater length emphasis than the Nixon items ($F=5.52$, $df=1$, $p<.05$). In addition, a t-test of the NBC means indicated that NBC alone gave significantly greater length emphasis to McGovern items than to Nixon items. It should be pointed out, though, that while the overall McGovern mean was significantly higher, Nixon items were given more time on an absolute basis---8,729 seconds as compared with 7,476 seconds for McGovern.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Table 5 deals with the extent to which the networks functioned as reporters or mediators of the political events and to what extent they let the candidates and their supporters speak directly to the public. For example, if a candidate delivers a speech the networks have the option of telling the viewers about what the candidate said or actually putting some film clips of him on the screen and letting the public see and hear him directly. As can be seen from Table 5, all three networks devoted significantly higher proportions of time to pro-McGovern speakers (McGovern, Shriver, Kennedy, etc.) in McGovern items than they did to pro-Nixon speakers in Nixon news items. The reason for this differential seems obvious. McGovern was campaigning actively and agressively almost every day of the campaign period, while Nixon ventured out from the White House on relatively fewer occasions and sent "surrogates" out to speak instead. Thus, the most likely explanation, but one that cannot be tested within the context of this study, is that McGovern's more active campaign made better copy for the networks to use.

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

Table 6 presents a summary of four types of visual emphasis used by the three networks in handling Nixon and McGovern items. The data in the Visual Aid columns are means for the number of visual aids employed per news item. The data in all of the other six columns are proportions. A two-way analysis of variance of the Visual Aid data produced no significant main effects or interaction effects.

Both CBS and NBC employed Film/Tape visual emphasis in a significantly higher proportion of McGovern news items than Nixon items. There were no significant differences at all in the proportion of Nixon items and McGovern items receiving Correspondent-On-Camera visual emphasis. However, in the last column, All Three, it can be seen that NBC gave significantly more visual emphasis to McGovern news items than to Nixon items. All Three is a combination of the three previous categories. In other words, NBC used Visual Aids, plus Film/Tape, plus a Correspondent-On-Camera together in 43% of its McGovern items as compared with 18% of its Nixon items. In addition, the totals for Film/Tape and All Three on McGovern items were signigicantly higher than on Nixon items.

It is interesting to note that while not all of the 16 comparisons in Table 6 are statistically significant, the scores for 14 of them are higher on the McGovern items than on the Nixon items. In other words, there was a rather consistent <u>overall pattern</u> of greater visual emphasis given to McGovern news items.

Discussion and Conclusions

Contrary to what Pride and Wamsley state, it <u>is</u> possible to study news bias without studying the news events or information inputs per se. However,

the desirability of studying news inputs as well as news outputs is not to be denied. For example, the most significant finding from the verbal half of the study is that the networks carried significantly more anti-Republican judgments than anti-Democratic judgments. However, the question this study cannot answer is the extent to which these judgments accurately reflected the number of anti-Republican and anti-Democratic judgments actually made by participants in Campaign '72.

The findings of this study are also contradictory to the conclusion of Pride and Wamsley that, "transcripts of the news broadcasts can be used as a data base with confidence that the absence of the video component does not significantly alter the results."[16] While this might be true in isolated instances, there is certainly inadequate empirical evidence to accept this statement as a generalization. In this particular study, the verbal data were not particularly clearcut on the question of bias for one candidate or the other---with the possible exception of the number of anti-Republican judgments the networks carried. On the other hand, the non-verbal data did show an overall pattern which can be interpreted as a pro-McGovern bias in general, but more-so for CBS and NBC than for ABC. ABC showed little significant bias for either candidate. Only in Table 5 does ABC show a significant pro-McGovern bias, and this could be a function of the greater availability of film footage of McGovern and his supporters out campaigning.

Needless to say, the subject of bias in television news has been relatively little-explored, and much more research needs to be done. In particular, attention needs to be given to the task of developing new measures of bias and validating old ones. As a step in this direction, it should be helpful to compare the methods and findings reported in this study with the

methods and findings of other researchers who studied the same general topic during Campaign '72 and whose reports are forthcoming.

Some writers, such as Weaver, argue that it is "the nature of the television news form itself" which results in bias. "In other words, what Nixon encountered in 1968 was not an essentially political bias, it was an essentially journalistic bias."[17] If this indeed was the case in 1968, it does not seem to have been completely the case in 1972. If "the nature of the television news form itself" caused the bias found in this study, then it would be expected that this would apply equally to all three networks, instead of primarily to CBS and NBC.

In all likelihood there are many more types of bias than have ever been measured in any study of bias, including this one. Researchers studying bias in the future might find it productive to employ both multiple levels or types of bias, and also multiple measures of bias at each level.

FOOTNOTES

1 Burns W. Roper, What People Think of Television and Other Mass Media: 1959-1972 (New York: Television Information Office, 1973), p. 9.

2 Neil Hickey, "What America Thinks of TV's Political Coverage," TV Guide, April 8, 1972, pp. 6-8, 10-11; Roger J. Youman, "What Does America Think Now?" TV Guide, Sept. 30, 1972, pp. A1-A4.

3 Roger Ailes, as quoted in Neil Hickey, "Make News, Not Commercials," TV Guide, May 27, 1972, pp. 6-8, 10, 12, at p. 7.

4 Walter DeVries and V. Lance Tarrance, The Ticket-Splitter: A New Force in American Politics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 77.

5 Richard A. Pride and Gary L. Wamsley, "Symbol Analysis of Network Coverage of Laos Incursion," Journalism Quarterly, 49:635-640, 647 (Winter 1972), at p. 636.

6 Malcom W. Klein and Nathan Maccoby, "Newspaper Objectivity In the 1952 Campaign," Journalism Quarterly, 31:285-296 (Summer 1954), at p. 289.

7 Dennis T. Lowry, "Agnew and the Network TV News: A Before After Content Analysis," Journalism Quarterly, 48:205-210 (Summer 1971); Dennis T. Lowry, "Gresham's Law and Network TV News Selection," Journal of Broadcasting, 15:397-408 (Fall 1971).

8 Language in Thought and Action (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949), Ch. 3.

9 Ibid., p. 38.

10 Some examples: The President was in the White House today. [Either he was or he wasn't.] Senator George McGovern took his presidential campaign into the New York area today before moving on to Detroit. [Either he did or he didn't.] The President called it the biggest dinner in the whole

history of American politics. [Either he called it this or he didn't.]

11 Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 41.

12 Some examples: While McGovern received no endorsement as a result of this mission, he flew back to Washington obviously pleased with his reception in the Jewish community. [What is obvious pleasure to one person may not be to another.] What's really missing from this campaign is a hard-headed exchange between the two candidates. [This is purely the reporter's subjective opinion. What is a "hard-headed exchange", anyway?] So it was when the President called reporters into his Oval Office today and held a rare news conference. [What is rare to one person may not be rare to another.]

13 Some examples: Even as the peace talks went on, the Democratic campaigners stepped up their apparently coordinated attack on President Nixon on the war issue. If McGovern's luck indeed has changed, perhaps he can take heart from the rain today, which almost let him finish his speech. One, for example, might cover the Vietnam war, the need for improved veterans' benefits, and McGovern's views on amnesty.

14 Haykawa, op. cit., p. 42.

15 Some examples: And he insisted that the Nixon Administration has a sorry ethical record, and that it's the President's fault. Well, today, McGovern was in Detroit, where he said of Agnew, "Don't you dare question my patriotism", and in Rochester, New York, where he said Mr. Agnew has a great deal to learn about that ugly spectacle in Southeast Asia. On tax reform, the President says McGovern is calling for, "confiscation of wealth", which is not true.

16 Pride and Wamsley, op. cit., p. 647.

17 Paul H. Weaver, "Is Television News Biased?" The Public Interest, 26:57-74 (Winter 1972), at p. 67.

FIGURE 1

Interrelationships of Observer/Reporters, the Event, and the Reports they Produce

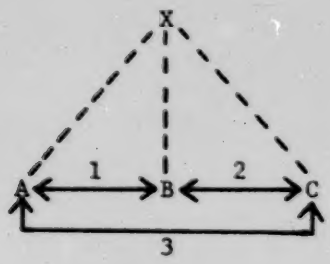

TABLE 1

A Comparison of Content Category Percentages on Nixon and McGovern News Items[a]

	ABC		CBS		NBC		Total		
	Nixon	McGovern	Nixon	McGovern	Nixon	McGovern	Nixon	McGovern	Difference
Category 1[b]	13%	13%	23%	21%	14%	18%	16%	17%	1%
2	18	12	22	15	24	20	21	15	6**
3	2	7	4	7	4	2	3	6	3*
4	63	61	50	49	53	51	56	54	2
5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
6D	1	--	1	1	3	2	2	1	1
6R	1	6	--	7	--	7	--	6	6***
7	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
8	--	--	--	--	1	1	--	--	--
9	1	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	1
N	296	210	212	193	270	174	778	577	

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

a All percentages rounded to nearest whole per cent; therefore not all columns total 100%. All tests two-tailed.

b Explanation of categories: (1) report sentences/attributed; (2) report sentences/unattributed; (3) inference sentences/labeled; (4) inference sentences/unlabeled; (5) judgment sentences/attributed/favorable; (6D) judgment sentences/attributed/unfavorable toward Democrats; (6R) judgment sentences/attributed/unfavorable toward Republicans; (7) judgment sentences/unattributed/favorable; (8) judgment sentences/unattributed/unfavorable; (9) all other sentences.

TABLE 2

Number of Nixon and McGovern News Items Carried by Each of the Three Networks

	Nixon	McGovern
ABC	35	25
CBS	27	22
NBC	38	21
Total	100	68

TABLE 3

Mean Position Emphasis Given to Nixon and McGovern News Items

	Nixon	McGovern
ABC	5.83	5.88
CBS	6.22	4.32
NBC	6.89	6.00
Total	6.34	5.41

TABLE 4

Mean Time Emphasis (Number of Seconds)
Given to Nixon and McGovern News Items

	Nixon	McGovern
ABC	96.26	107.24
CBS	87.19	111.50
NBC	79.11	111.52*

*p<.05

TABLE 5

Proportion of On-Camera Time Devoted to
Pro-Nixon Speakers in Nixon News Items and
Pro-McGovern Speakers in McGovern News Items

	Nixon	McGovern
ABC	24%	27%**
CBS	24	29***
NBC	18	31***

**p<.01 ***p<.001

TABLE 6

A Comparison of Four Types of Visual Emphasis Given to Nixon and McGovern News Items

	Nixon Items				McGovern Items			
	VA[a]	F/T	COC	All Three	VA	F/T	COC	All Three
ABC	1.49	63%	46%	46%	1.24	72%	60%	56%
CBS	.93	48	26	11	1.55	82*	27	27
NBC	.97	53	42	18	.86	81*	52	43*
Total	1.14	55%	39%	26%	1.22	78%**	47%	43%*

*McGovern proportions significantly different from corresponding Nixon proportions at .05 level; **$p < .01$. All tests two-tailed.

a Explanation of categories: VA---mean number of Visual Aids per news item; F/T---proportion of news items which contained film or tape coverage of the event being reported; COC---proportion of news items in which the correspondent reporting the event is shown on camera; All 3---proportion of news items in which all three of the above types of visual emphasis were used.